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ABSTRACT

Much research has examined the career success of individuals participating in mentoring and administrator-preparation programs. This paper presents findings of a study that explored the experiences of 33 people who participated in an indistrict mentoring program for teachers aspiring to administrative positions. The purpose was to identify patterns that distinguished participants who became administrators from those who did not. Findings show that those who became administrators and those who did not perceived the program's function and opportunities differently. Participants who became administrators perceived signals from the school district and used them to understand the process of upward mobility. The career paths of aspirants who had mentors were different than the paths of those not mentored. Seven of the nine females who obtained a position had mentors. (Contains 2 tables and 71 references.) (LMI)

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ED 403 638

POLITICS OF EDUCATION: Administrative Hopefuls' Perceptions of Opportunities

Autumn Turoczy

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The steps from classroom teacher to administrative aspirant to practicing administrator cannot be described easily. Researchers have used several frames of reference to explain how persons achieve career mobility. Examples of these frames include sponsored mobility, ascriptive allocation of administrative status, and mobility through competition.

This study is an analysis of the remembered experiences of thirty three persons who had been or still are teachers, and participated in a school district-sponsored program of administrative development. Some of the participants subsequently became administrators and some did not

Some contemporary scholars, such as Daresh and Playko, have been studying school district use of programs to identify and sponsor aspiring teachers into entry level administrative positions. These and other mentor based programs have produced varying results; some participants have achieved new status and some have not. The author examined one in-district mentoring program for aspiring administrators with the intent of discovering patterns which distinguish those persons who have become administrators from those who have not.

This study recognizes that participants are presented opportunities designed to further their careers. Additionally, this research rests on the assumption that it is the interaction of the participant and the tendered opportunity which largely determines the outcome of the experience. Some, it is argued, are more able or are more willing to see and seize the subtle signals embedded in the opportunity, and thus can take greater advantage of it. While the study is an exploration of structural, demographic, and other groups of variables, it has a particular focus on how participants frame the program and how they interpret institutional signals.

The mentoring program which is the focus of this study exists in a large unified school district in northeast Phoenix . The program was implemented in 1985 and has accepted fifty-eight participants. Participants are in the program for two years, with new members entering every year.

Theoretical Framework

The phenomenon of transitioning from the classroom to the administrative office is a process that does not have one clear explanation. This process has received a great deal of attention during the past twenty years (Collins and Scott,1978; Ortiz,1982; Pavan,1985; Valverde,1980, Atkinson,1981). These efforts resulted in identification of factors that contribute to a successful transition into administration. Factors that are specifically relevant to this study include contest and sponsored mobility, mentorship, mentoring programs, the role of the mentee.

Contest and Sponsored Mobility

The promotion of individuals in school districts is mainly the result of two types of processes: contest mobility or sponsored mobility. Contest mobility refers to upward movement based on competition between aspirants.

Sponsored mobility refers to the adoption and elevation of an aspirant by an administrator within the district (Valverde,1980). The necessary steps of the sponsor-protege model which incorporates an aspirant into the administrative ranks are: identification, announcement, adoption, training and advancement (Valverde, 1980, p.39)

Mentoring

Mentoring can be traced to the writings of the Greeks. In Homer's Odyssey, the loyal companion of King Odysseus, Mentor, was charged with the care and education of the King's son, Telemachus. Mentor was actually the goddess Athena in disguise. Current use of the term typically refers to a close, mutually beneficial relationship between someone who is older, wiser, more experienced, and more powerful, and someone who is younger or less experienced.(Jeruchim and Shapiro,1992) The androgynous nature of the Athena/Mentor caretaker holds true for contemporary mentors. Jeruchim and Shapiro(1992) defined an ideal mentor as nurturing, supportive, and protective-along with being aggressive, assertive, and taking risks.

Pavan (1987) found that mentors in education help move the aspirant into administration by providing administrative experience, access to other district administrators, and career guidance. In the past, one of the most productive ways to secure a mentor was to enter the network of school coaching and sponsorship of extra curricular activities. Such activity brings them into professional contact with authorities who could, subsequently, facilitate upward mobility. Traditionally, the majority of teachers who volunteered to coach and sponsor, have been men (Greenfield,1977). Thus, historically, aspiring leaders most visible to administration were men, and it has only been in the last few years that women have become more actively involved in highly visible activities in districts. (Shakeshaft,1987)

Mentoring Programs

In an effort to seek new perspectives and an equitable balance of gender for administrative positions, several school districts have been influenced by management training in the private sector and have begun to establish formal mentoring programs for aspiring school administrators (Daresh and Playko,1988). In the majority of school district mentoring

programs applicants are experienced teachers who are required to participate in a screening and or interview process. Those that are accepted are given opportunities to work with an experienced administrator and observed. The aspirant's performance can be evaluated and critiqued. This information may play a role in the development of the aspirant's reputation among potential bosses in the district. The average length of time for a mentoring program for aspiring administrators is one to three years.(Daresh and Playko,1989)

The Role of the Mentee

The mentee's willingness to contribute to the relationship, seize professional opportunities, and his or her willingness to learn from the mentor are all related to how the mentoring relationship contributes to professional growth (Scott,1992). The view that an individual's success can be linked to how he or she interacts with opportunities is echoed in Geer, Becker, Hughes and Strauss' 1984 book, Boys in White.

Geer and his co-authors studied medical students in their first years of medical school. The authors discovered that these students are overwhelmed with assignments and tasks. In order to succeed (and therefore move to the next level of medical training) the students' perceptions of the experiences offered to them evolved. After a short time, the students began to understand that achieving required them to select opportunities to take advantage of and opportunities or experiences to ignore. Decisions to ignore or participate in opportunities were based on individual perception of how much that opportunity or task would benefit politically, intellectually, and professionally.

Daresh and Playko (1995) supported the conclusions of Boys in White , by studying professional relationships among aspiring administrators and their mentors in a preservice preparation program. Their conclusions were that aspirants who seek a fruitful mentoring relationship need to possess qualities that include good listening skills, an openness to learning from colleagues, a willingness to admit a lack of knowledge, and a desire to work with peers. It is also important that proteges also value the potential of learning through a mentoring relationship. Proteges are indeed active partners in the process of mentoring, and they have an important set of responsibilities.(Daresh and Playko, 1995).

To Summarize, a great deal of research has been conducted on the success of aspirants participating in mentoring and preservice preparation programs (Daresh,1986;Daresh,1990;Ortiz,1982). The significant themes that

have resulted from explorations in this area focus on the point of view of the program provider, or the mentor. Examples of these findings include specific explanations as to how mentoring programs can be constructed and how one can effectively mentor an aspirant. Very little research exists that centers on the point of view of the aspirant. Recently, there has been some discussion raised by Daresh and Playko(1995) that revolves around what an aspirant can do to ensure a beneficial relationship with a mentor. However, there are dynamics of the aspirant's journey to administration that have not been addressed.

Method and Results

The purpose of this research has been to study the views of participants in a preparation program for aspiring administrators. Because the intent of the research was to describe and examine, an open-ended field study approach was utilized. The purpose of the investigation determined the framework for the research methodology because the research strategy was derived from the problem, the researcher, and the models (Reinharz,1979).A naturalistic paradigm was selected because it provides a rich, multidimensional, and dynamic appreciation of what is.

The technique for gathering data employed in this investigation was the process of in-depth interviewing. This investigator explored a few general topics to obtain the participants' perspective and how their frame of reality.

The preparation program that was the focus of this study has been in existence since 1983. The program serves interested teachers who aspire to be administrators in a large unified school district located in the Southwestern United States. The program was created and implemented by the assistant superintendent of the district.

The process of finding aspirants to participate in the program entailed advertising a blurb about the program in the district newsletter. Interested aspirants are invited to complete an application for membership that was available at the district office. Applications were then paper screened and reduced to a pool of possible candidates that were scheduled to interview before a panel of administrators. The panel included the program director and various other district level officials. Candidates were asked a series of open ended questions that encouraged them to share their philosophy of education, decision making skills, and interests. The interviewers rated answers given by all candidates and selected a pool of aspirants to invite into the program. Aspirants were notified by mail of their acceptance or rejection.

The structure of the program was two fold: classes that were conducted by the assistant superintendent twice a month as well as the opportunity for

aspirants to serve as administrative interns.

Classes met in the evening for one or two hours. A typical class consisted of discussions, presentations by invited district administrators, and group activities. Aspirants were asked yearly to identify a school or administrator that they would like to work with for seven to ten days. The district provided a substitute teacher to cover the aspirant's responsibilities at his or her home school while the aspirant spent time at the site requested.

The program lasted for two years. A new group of aspirants are screened and accepted every year. Interviews were conducted in the spring of the year, and selected candidates were invited to join the program in the summer and the program began in the autumn. Thus, the annual cadre of program members consisted of new or freshmen aspirants and senior aspirants completing their second year.

Sample Description

A decision was made to sample a cross section of all the participants that the preparation program served since its inception. A list of all program participants was obtained and a representative sample of males and females were contacted for interview. Because there were significantly more female participants in this program than males: males were over-sampled. A total of fifty-six people had gone through the program at the time of the study. Thirty-nine of those participants were women, seventeen were men. A total of thirty three people were interviewed.

Twenty (51%) of the thirty-nine female participants were randomly selected and agreed to participate in semi-structured interviews. Because there was a significantly smaller number of males than females in the program, males were over-sampled. This author was able to contact thirteen of the seventeen male participants, and ten(76%) agreed to interviews. The interviews revealed information that allowed subjects to be organized into the following rubric:

TABLE ONE

CATEGORY	NUMBER OF ASPIRANTS INTERVIEWED
1. Sponsored males that obtained position in administration	4
2. Contest males that obtained position in administration	2
3. Males that never obtained a position in administration	5
4. Males that declined a position in administration	2
5. Sponsored females that obtained position in administration	4
6. Contest females that obtained position in administration	5
7. Females that never obtained a position in administration	8
8. Females that declined a position in administration	3

The names of these categories were condensed to "Sponsored Hits" "Contest Hits", "Misses", and "Declines". In order to identify participants quotations in this study, the following identifying convention was developed : (m) Male;(f) Female; (H) "Hit"; (C)"Contest"; (S) "Sponsored"; (D)"Decline"; and (#) individual code. For example, fHC2 indicates a female who obtained an administrative position after the program was over, entered the program without evident sponsorship, and is the second individual in the group. Or, mM1 indicates a male who did not obtain an administrative position after the program was over, and is the first individual in the group.

Data Collection and Analysis

Primary sources of data were collected though audio tape recorded, open-ended interviews with aspirants who participated in the program. Interviews were transcribed verbatim with dialog attributed to each speaker. Data derived from these interviews was then reviewed for recurring themes. Elements in the data were coded in terms of emergent categories and sub categories. The constant comparative method was used to code, write and analyze data as an ongoing process. Then, quotations were extracted from transcripts and placed into files with each file representing a distinct idea or theme. These files were then read, edited and organized into a core set of themes.

The interpretation of those themes became the basis for formulating a framework for detailing the differences that existed between subjects' perception of, and reactions to, opportunities in the program. The above framework became a platform for describing the different ways that administrative aspirants viewed and reacted to opportunity in the preparation program.

Discussion of Results

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions and experiences of aspiring administrators during their tenure in a preparation program for administrative hopefuls. What has been learned is that there were common patterns among participant views that can be analyzed in three major categories.

The differences in participant perception in these areas produced three major findings in this study. Below is a discussion of each.

The function of the program, and the opportunities within it, were perceived differently by aspirants who became administrators and aspirants who did not.

The majority of participants who obtained administrative positions asserted that the program had two purposes; the first as stated in district generated literature; the second as a testing ground where they were to be scrutinized and evaluated by upper level officials at the district:

> I remember that (the class) as being nerve-wracking. I didn't know what to expect. I was probably looking at it from more the perspective of a training ground, a proving ground, and the fact that I was going to be very, very, carefully watched over two years of intense scrutiny as any and every move was being analyzed. So for me, the program experience was a wonderful learning experience but it was for me personally very difficult just from a standpoint of trying to prove and trying to make sure I was constantly doing and saying the right things. Especially as it compared to my classmates. Many of the people that I was in the group with stayed very close with because of the tension that occurred within the context of our two years, and it was a friendly competitiveness. But there were definite dynamics that were there and those to whom I was closest we would talk about the tension as we would come to the meetings- and not as much about it being a really comfortable learning experience, more of"did you hear what he said and how he said it, or what she said and how she would try and take part in the conversation". (fHS1)

> I think the function is to identify people that have the capability to be administrators and when we were there I always got the feeling it was to promote administration in our own district. (mHS1)

> I think that there are some specific written down purposes, objectives, and goals, and I also think there are some underlining objectives and goals of the program that are not written down. One that's written is to give the district a chance to cultivate administrators from within... The unwritten thing is it's a way for them (the district) to see potential people. (mHS3)

> (The purpose of the program is) Two-fold. One is truly to develop leaders within the district whether it is a school leader or whether it is someone whose is leading that's been in a school under a leader or at the district. The other one I think is to give the district an

opportunity to see who is out there and to actually screen them. (fHC1)

Contrary to consistent responses offered by participants who became administrators, participants who were Declines or Misses offered a variety of perspectives concerning the function of and opportunities within the program. Unlike the perspectives listed above, these two categories of participants saw the purpose as essentially singular. The program was a either a training ground or a contest arena.

Well my thought at the time was, and I think its a fine purpose, that it is sort of a weed out program for in-house administrative selection. Sure if I were an administrator at their level and their capacity, I would want some mechanism for saying yes or no. (mD1)

I think that they were looking to train their own people and that's one of the things I enjoyed about the program. I think that makes sense. (fD2)

(The program was) Kind of like a student teaching opportunity to find out more about the district and your roles and responsibilities as an administrator but I was disappointed to this extent that I thought there would be more orientation to how we do things in the district. (fM1)

The purpose was to give you a better understanding for what goes on in administration depending on what area you'd like to go into and to give you the training and opportunity to do that. And to understand how our district functions as a whole. (fM4)

You know, I did not feel a sense of competition. I really think all of us, I know my feelings, and the ones I was with, were that we were really just happy to see any of the program members get an administrative job. We were like a team. (fM7)

I did not see it as a competitive kind of thing. I mean I did not feel that way about it... It was very informative and I went into it feeling as if I was going to gain from it and learn something and I think everyone else had pretty much the same attitude.(fM1)

> I think there might have been a underlying sense of competition in the Spring once they start posting positions, but I don't think anyone holds it as a competition. I don't think anyone makes a big deal of it just because we are all in there going for the same thing. We really helped each other out a lot through the whole process. (mM1)

Aspirants who became administrators perceived signals from the district and used them as a guide to understanding the process of upward mobility.

The participants who became administrators consistently mentioned that they recognized signals or behaviors, such as GASing, that they thought differentiated those candidates who were on the track to administration from those who were not. They copied these signals in their own behaviors during their tenure as participants. There efforts were directed primarily toward the program director, who was also the assistant superintendent. Examples of GASing included engaging him or other administrators in one on one conversations about professional and personal issues, volunteering for various high profile projects and committees, and making contributions to group discussions:

> I think that there were some people in the room that were trying to be seen and be noticed and be heard more than others. Trying to impress or show off in front of the director. I could tell that by listening and watching their interactions with the director. (mHS3)

> I thought I was dealing with some really 'go- getter' kind of people, real aggressive kind of people... It was just what they said and what people wore and how they sat and how they talked to the Director. I watched a lot of body language... I felt like there was a pecking order and there was a place you had to sit. (fHC3)

> I was obvious in the program who was intent on heading out. Within a year or two who would be looking for something administratively, and those who were just kind of playing with it. It was obvious in the way they dressed. In the level of intensity they put in their answers and in the level of both the planned and unplanned presentations they had to make. It was really a holistic kind of thing, about how that person sat, how that person listened, how that person responded to both the director's questions and to each other. (fHC1)

Even as a teacher in my initial years of the program I changed my wardrobe. More suits. I went through one period of being concerned about my hair and wanting to change the style of my hair so that it looked more professional verses a longer look. I definitely worked with my professional appearance. I got into reading more of the professional literature trying to stay aware of what was going on. I tried to be much more involved in the running of the district through district committees. That visibility as well as that knowledge gaining factor began to be very time consuming but then that's were the learning came. I definitely wanted to put in the time to make sure I was getting the knowledge I needed so that when I attended the meeting I had something to say. (fSH3)

After a presentation or something I would try and ask a question that was a logical meaningful question and not just something to be asked for the sake of asking it to look good. I didn't want to just brown nose. I wanted to be genuine. I didn't want to be talking in order to make an impression; sometimes you feel torn that you'd better say something so that they don't think you are a bump on a log. I'd be wracking my brain trying to figure out what should I ask, what should I say, what would be intelligent, or what would be stupid, and that's probably why I was tired all the time... I actually went out and bought, on credit, suits to look the part. My husband and I had nothing financially , we were seriously in debt and I told him that this was an investment and I truly believed that.
If you are going in that direction then you better start looking the part. You have to be the part, but you have to look the part too. (fHC2)

Hopefuls who obtained positions also paid special attention to discussions during the class phase of the program. They looked for opportunities to make contributions that highlighted their own activities, or knowledge of a particular subject. The majority of "Misses" recognized that GASing was occurring in the form of class participation, but declared their own hesitancies to do so:

Several of the classes, towards the end of the program, the director would use for mock interviews. There were two people that would

have the opportunity to do that... I needed to do that. To get up and just try to get over the nervousness, but I would be the last one to ever volunteer. (fM7)

I got involved - without totally kissing up and getting in (the group). I did not feel that was accepted in this tight group of four or five that were already in the district working up at the district office who had more of a personal in with people. (fM3)

I felt there was more of an effort to talk to the program director on an individual basis the second year... I felt this scrambling mode of people trying to do a better job here and there and get things moving along and I just felt it. I was willing to work at a high school as an intern but I did not really care where and I was willing to sit back and watch and I think when I was watching, I noticed a kind of competition between the secondary mentees which I was did not particularly want to throw myself into. I had already done some of this administrative work and I did not really have to prove anything to anybody... (fM6)

Two participants chose not to GAS because they were frustrated with the format of the class:

I thought for three hours the meeting could have been condensed maybe into an hour and the director did not have to hold us there until 9 p.m.. That free flowing,"lets all talk" style was just not for me. ... if you are not getting the point across I am doing other things, and I did. I was grading papers, I wrote letters, it was great. Three hours I would sit there for one week in the month... I did not like the laid back attitude. We did a lot of things in groups and I sometimes think groups are a waste. (fM2)

It was frustrating as hell because you walk in there for two hours dead on your ass- then your trying to figure you what to do. No one knew what to do. It was like all made up sometimes. I figured out after about one or two, three, things said there really wasn't much you could do. That wasn't a book you could go consult and read and I don't think that there was a bibliography with which to consult for outside readings. I just watched the clock. (mM2)

"Declines" recognized GASing but chose not to participate because they were not interested in obtaining a position:

> I could sense that other people might be doing some things that I wasn't doing that would again put that best foot forward. It might be subtle stuff. On occasion I would hear conversations where it was apparent to me that the person participating in the program might be using their time, the issues, and so forth as an opportunity to get to know the chief administrator of the program a little better. My style is such that I would not necessarily do that. For example after an internship a person might send a thank you note to the principal they interned with and also the director... Now was I making fatal flaws and mistakes or was the other person working too hard... Sucking up wasn't an issue for me. (mD1)

> I learned some things that were not necessarily the things I needed to be a principal. They were more like things I needed to do to get the job (of obtaining a principalship) done. Things like, play the game, put your best foot forward. Don't tell them what you think, tell them what they want to hear. I don't think everyone understood that. (mD2)

The majority of those who became administrators also said that during their internships they engaged in conversations with host administrators about the formal and informal politics of the district, and professional mobility. Participants in other categories did not mention this.

> I had a lot of time with the host assistant principal where we would sit and talk so I asked her a lot of questions about both her experience outside the district and her experience within the district and what she thought the possibilities were for the future and also what she thought she would be doing herself. (fHC1)

> I shadowed the host principal for a while and then basically he allowed me to do whatever I wanted to do that week, so I kind of was on my own and I learned quite a bit from just visiting

classrooms. I always ended up getting back to asking the host about the issue of family and work because I was trying to make an intelligent decision about it whether I could balance both. He basically shared that you run the risk of divorce... As far as actually getting the job I think he believed that it is harder for women and that women work very hard at getting a job, and again it was you do what you need to do and what you are comfortable with. As far as giving me advice, he shared some things about the politics of the district with me. Things in terms of getting along with people at the district office is what I mostly remember. (fHC2)

The host principal told me I better get myself out of the self contained classroom. That I was never going to go anywhere as long as I was in that classroom because there were very few of those kind of people and as long as I stayed there they were never going to move me. He also told me that I did not want to spend too much time in a department chairship.(fHC3)

The host did not really know me so his comments were always very professional. He would ask what we were doing in the program. He also answered questions about how the district worked. He shared with me that the program director is the one who is involved in any type of screening interviews along with the principal. The host shared that the director was fairly influential that what he (the director) thought mattered and that his opinion of you was probably formed at that point and he just needed to refine that. The director made judgments rather quickly and that the director rarely changed his mind. The host gave me some interesting examples of a person that he was trying to sponsor into the program that the director had refused entry to. The host expressed some frustration over that. It more or less confirmed that I should take this very seriously. That I was on the right track with all the things that I was doing. (fHC5)

Yeah, I talked to her about the internal politics of the district. We talked about how she felt about administration, what she saw as the pros and cons. I asked for advice about what would be important to know in this job. I wanted to know about problems in the building.(fHS3)

The career paths of aspirants with mentors were significantly different than the paths of aspirants who were not mentored.

A difference was found between those hopefuls who claimed that they had a mentor and those who did not. All but one of the participants who became administrators identified a mentor. It is significant to note that the most obvious pattern concerning mentoring and mobility was that seven of the nine females who obtained a position in administration identified the program director as a mentor. The majority of aspirants who did not become administrators said that they did not have a mentor. A matrix of who mentored whom is outlined below:

Table Two

Male Hits (Sponsored)

Participant		Mentor
MHS1	-	Supervising Principal #1 (m)*
MHS2	-	No mentor
MHS3	-	Program Director (m)
MHS4	-	Assistant Superintendent #1 (f)*

Female Hits (Sponsored)

Participant	Mentor
FHS1	- Program Director (m)
FHS2	- Program Director (m)
FHS3	- Program Director (m)
FHS4	- Program Director (m)

Male Hits (Contest)

Participant		Mentor
MHC1	-	Supervising Principal #2 (f)
MHC2	-	Supervising Principal #3 (f)

Female Hits (Contest)

Participant	Mentor
FHC1	-Program Director (m)
FHC2	-Program Director (m)
FHC3	-Program Director (m)
FHC4	-Supervising Principal #3(f)
FHC5	-Supervising Principal #5(m)

Male Misses

Participant		Mentor
MM1	-	No mentor
MM2	-	No mentor
MM3	-	Refused to participate
MM4	-	Refused to participate
MM5	-	Refused to participate

Female Misses

Participant	Mentor
FM1-	No mentor
FM2-	Supervising Principal #6 (m)
FM3-	Supervising Principal #7 (m)
FM4 -	No mentor
FM5 -	Asst. Superintendent #2 (f)
FM6 -	No mentor
FM7 -	Supervising Principal #8 (m)
FM8 -	No mentor

Table Two cont.

Male Declines		Female Declines	
Participant	Mentor	Participant	Mentor
MD1	-No mentor	FD1	-No mentor
MD2	-Supervising Principal #4 (f)	FD2	-No mentor
		FD3	-Internship host (m)

* (m) = male (f) = female

Participants who became administrators reported that they sought from their mentors political insights about the process of obtaining an administrative position:

> I confided in her a lot. Probably more than anyone. And she would ask a lot about how class went. You know,'How did it go? What kind of topics did you discuss?' She also acted like a teacher to me. She would ask me,'What did you get out of this experience or 'What did you think'. I asked her about who I should intern with. She was always there with lots of advice and I think she really helped with my confidence. We had lots of conversations about how the system worked (mHC2)

> I think he was a mentor to me. It was not anything that was stated outwardly but in my case one on one conversations with him that I would have either before or after class- there were things that he would do and say that would help me know what I needed to do next or would help me know where to grow. He was very good at sharing that insight that I needed. I do not know if everyone got that from the director. I do not know if everyone sought it out like I did...
>
> There was a lot of learning that second year in the program. I had spent the summer interviewing for jobs in the district and not getting them. I asked the program director if I could come in after the interviews were over to get feedback on them. So I began to do that. I sought out feedback from my principal as well. I asked him what kinds of questions can I expect on the next interview? What is the interview protocol? What should I take? What should I do when I am there? Should I shake hands? Sitting, shaking hands, the whole thing, from the time I arrived to the time I left. That helped me a great deal. (fHC1)

> After I did not get in the program the first time- I went back to my principal to talk to her about it. The principal shared with me that the director felt that I did not interview well and that is why I did not get in. So I asked her ,'What do I need to do to get in?' She really helped me out a lot. She always was there for me to encourage me. She gave me suggestions on what to say and talked about the questions they might ask. (mHC2)

> After the job interviews for assistant positions I am sure that I went for feedback from the director. It was hard- listening to all that constructive criticism- but I did it.(fHC4)

> I was pretty busy with activities of my own. I also made point to seek out the director's advice when it came time to select a person to intern with. Both times we would talk about where I wanted to grow and what he thought would be the best place for me. He really helped me figure out where I stood in the district's eyes. Then he would let me know who he thought would be the best person. (fHC5)

Aspirants who obtained positions in administration did so through contest or sponsorship. In this study, sponsorship is defined as a function of mentorship. Those aspirants who were sponsored reported that they were invited by an administrator in the district to join the preparation program, and that entrance interviews were not stressful. Conversely, those who obtained positions by contest, as well as those who did not obtain a position, said that they discovered the preparation program through a district newsletter or by word of mouth. Aspirants in these two groups also described the entrance interview as a stressful and formal experience.

It is also significant to note that the majority of people who did not obtain a position in administration said that they were intent on becoming administrators only in the sponsoring district, and were unwilling to apply for administrative positions outside. Of the thirteen people in the Miss category, three (all males) refused to participate in this study. Nine of the remaining ten said that they had a reluctance to look for positions outside of the district:

> You know it seemed like everywhere I went in that district people told me to apply outside for a job. I don't want to do that. I moved in this district on purpose so I could live in the district that I work in. I love

this district. I am comfortable here. I am not willing to look outside. I have interviewed for a lot of positions and I keep hearing that there is nothing wrong with me I am just not the right 'fit'. I understand that and I think eventually the right job will come up for me.(fM2)

The position I was interested in never opened up. I thought about looking elsewhere but what I want to do is very specific. I never applied in any other districts.(fM4)

I was approached my last year of the program to help run the district summer school program. In a sense I've got the best of both worlds. There really were not any positions out there. I toyed briefly with the idea of going to another district and I did not want to do that. There are some district things that come up and I don't want to work in those districts. They have enough problems in districts so there really has not been anything to come up and now I am kind of past that. I am past the risk taking stage of my life now.(fM5)

I just don't want to go outside of the district. I applied for a job and did not get it. I know that eventually there will be a job that is just right for me in this district. I love it here. This place is my home, it is like family here. So I don't mind waiting.(fM7)

I have been in this district for so long... I think if I went outside the district it would mean a cut in pay or benefits. I can't afford to do that. I have applied for jobs here, they know me. I guess at this point I am not sure about what I want to do.(fM6)

I grew up in this district. I have no desire to leave it. I think it would cost me part of my salary if I left anyway. It is frustrating to apply and try to get a position. I am just not ready to quit trying here. (fM8)

Correlations to Literature

The conclusions of this study are congruent with existing literature in two major areas; organizational socialization and mentoring. The findings are framed below within the context of existing literature in these two fields.

Perceiving Opportunity Within the Program

Organizational socialization involves the interaction between the individual and the organization. The person learns how to function effectively in the workplace, and the organization has the responsibility to help the individual become oriented. An interdependence occurs in which both the individual and the organization become changed. Initially the individual is most influenced by the interaction and the signals within the context of that interaction (Mead,1934).

Becker, Geer, Hughes, and Strauss's (1964) work analyzed how medical students perceived opportunity and prioritized responsibilities during their years as medical school students. This dissertation is similar in that the data analysis revealed that aspirants who successfully moved into administrative positions gave priority to and indulged in certain activities that would increase their visibility to district administrators
(This is also referred to as GASing).

Participant responses in this study also supported the work of Greenfield (1977) in that they felt engaging in GASing behavior helped to boost their move upward. Getting the Attention of A Superior was accomplished through participation on district level committees, volunteering to supervise or coordinate activities and projects outside the classroom, and engaging a superior in professional discussions.

This discovery of participants engaging in GASing activities dovetails into the assertions of Daresh and Playko (1995) and Scott(1992). These researchers stated that proteges interested in garnering the greatest benefits from being mentored need to actively participate in that relationship. Ways that aspirants can contribute to a relationship include listening carefully, demonstrating a willingness to learn and grow professionally, and seeking feedback and advice from a mentor when appropriate (Daresh and Playko, 1995).

The Mentoring Relationship and Mobility

Collins and Scott (1978) were the first of many researchers to assert that having a mentor can help the mobility of an aspirant. In this study, all but one of the aspirants who obtained an administrative position identified a mentor. Aspirants' descriptions of that mentor as a nurturer, role model, and advisor agree with the definitions offered many other researchers (Jeruchim and Shapiro,1992; Daresh,1988; Kram,1985, and Scott, 1992).

Respondents who obtained administrative positions said that they

played an active role in the relationships they developed with their mentors. Many sought feedback and advice from their building principals, the program director, and other administrators. Respondants who did not become administrators said that they did not seek feedback from an administrator. And many of the "miss" respondents did not identify a mentor.

In the context of this study, sponsorship was a function of mentorship. According to Ortiz(1982) and Valverde(1980), men more often find positions of leadership through sponsors than women do. Valverde asserts that the majority of administrators in school districts are male because existing administrators tend to identify and sponsor hopefuls that have personality traits that are similar to their own. Sponsors perpetuate the existing leadership by looking for those hopefuls that look and act like the current administration(Valverde, 1980). This study agrees: The majority of men interviewed who became administrators in this study were sponsored. And the majority of women who became administrators in this study did so through contest.

In terms of getting a job, all but two of the participants who became administrators work for the district that sponsored the program. All but one of the aspirants were hired during their tenure in the program or within a year of completing it.

The majority of women who did not obtain positions in leadership said that they were place-bound. This aligns with the work of Atkinson(1981), Ortiz (1982), and Jones and Montenegro(1983). It appears that women tend to be bound to a particular professional level for various reasons. These reasons can include responsibilities to family as well as a preference for living and working in a particular area. Most of the "miss" aspirants in this study said that it was more important to them to work for the district as a teacher than to work in another district as an administrator.

Implications for Aspiring Administrators

Teachers interested in becoming involved in a preparation program sponsored by a school district should make efforts to discern exactly what kind of program is offered. The preparation program for aspirants in this study should not be confused with mentoring programs described in the literature (Daresh,1988,1990; Daresh and Laplant,1985; Daresh and Playko, 1989, 1995; Scott, 1992; Pavan,1987). The program studied was essentially a contest arena that allowed aspirants the opportunity to learn about district policies while they demonstrated their talents to district administrators.

The aspirants who recognized and understood this dynamic were able to move into administrative positions with relative ease and speed. Hopefuls

interested in participating in a preparation program should remember that aspirants who failed to obtain administrative positions did not view the program as a contest arena and expressed frustration about the exact function and purpose of the program.

Aspirants should keep in mind the value of a mentor, and give careful attention to whom they seek mentorship from. This study clearly illustrated that having a mentor is important; it also showed that selecting the right mentor is just as important. The director of this program proved to be of significant support to those people who moved into leadership positions. Therefore an aspirant should examine carefully the benefits that a potential mentor can bring to his or her career. The importance of GASing in terms of what it can do to help secure a mentor should also be observed.

Finally, those people who are interested in benefiting the most out of participating in a program like the one studied need to remember that once a mentor is found, there are many responsibilities that the aspirant must fulfill in a successful mentoring relationship. This research agrees with Daresh(1995) in that those responsibilities include:

(A) Actively seeking professional feedback and insights to the work environment.

(B) Paying attention to the signals that the mentor and the organization send concerning how the mobility process in the district functions.

(C) Demonstrating a willingness to learn and contribute during any internship experiences.

It is not clear if the participants who did not become administrators would have found positions out of the district had they sought them. Those who wish to become administrators need to weigh carefully the need to be an administrator verses the need to remain employed within the district that they currently serve.

Implications for Further Research

The structure of this program promoted natural selection of administrators who are politically savvy. If an organization is interested in placing politically insightful and competitive persons, aprogram of this type may be useful. However, if an organization is interested in assisting people to become effective leaders, then this program is not what the literature (Daresh,1988,1990; Daresh and Laplant,1985; Daresh and Playko, 1989, 1995; Scott, 1992; Pavan,1987) describes as a mentoring program.

Further studies are needed to discover whether the approach that this district takes is one that is common to other school districts or if it is unique to this organization. If this approach is common in other districts, determination through research should be made to discover if it produces more effective leaders through natural selection.

Another question that this study raises concerns the program's contributions to the district. How beneficial is this program to the community that is serves? The program is successful in weeding in the most savvy and competitive of administrative aspirants. But is that what the district seeks or intends? If the district informed all of the participants upon entry that they were participating in a contest for administrative positions, would that change the behaviors of the participants? And thus, would the district be able to see the true strengths and weaknesses of each candidate? The final question raised in this study focuses on the aspirants themselves. This study was able to determine the different perceptions of those hopefuls who obtained a position and those who did not. What qualities do those hopefuls possess that allowed them to recognize opportunity when others did not?

This study has been successful in bringing a measure of clarity and focus to how participants in a mentoring program perceive opportunity, their environment, and their role. With further research, the relevancy of the findings to other professional fields can be determined.

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